

Burj-al Barajneh

From alcoves of rusty fuse boxes,
a spaghetti tangle of wires
carry currents of danger
over prison-like alleys
peppered with puddles
and garbage desolate
beneath damp and peeling walls.

Women seeming dark in the darkness
appear hopeful when light
blinks unexpectedly
where the width widens
and unknowing children
say ‘welcome’, as if, as if
theirs is a mansion
and this cruel tragedy
had never been composed.

Men seeming exhausted
by the illusion
of their right to return,
plea for help to escape
the shackles of permanence
with which their jailers,
in alliance with something called
‘the international community’
have crafted the fantasy
that these people
should stay silent and invisible
because they do not exist.

Beirut, Lebanon, 23rd Jan 2012